



# Spotlight on the District

## Gaylord Helms Electrician Leader, Logistics Management

Story and photo by Mark Kane

**A**squeaky chair, a burned-out light bulb, or a weird smell emanating from somewhere it shouldn't; if it's happening in the Clock Tower Building or the Clock Tower Annex, Gaylord Helms, electrician leader, Logistics Management, usually gets the call.

"Basically I maintain the electricity and plumbing in both the Clock Tower and the Annex," said Helms. "I also work a lot on issues concerning the systems furniture. In 1989, the systems furniture started here in the Clock Tower and it hasn't stopped since. Another big part of my job is to monitor and oversee the maintenance and service contracts. I'm heavily involved with the contractors and helping to get the job done."

Helms started with the Corps of Engineers in 1989 working as an electrician. He says he enjoys the variety in his job most.

"It's all the different things I do that makes it interesting," said Helms. "I also get to be around a lot of interesting people, because I'm rarely at my desk. Most people know to get ahold of me by paging me, but my e-mail and voice mail are always full too. It's definitely not a boring job, but I like it that way."

Helms hasn't forgotten his days working construction prior to being hired by the Corps and says it makes him appreciate working for the District even more.

"I worked in construction for awhile before I came here and the work was up and down," said Helms. "When things got really bad in 1980 and 1981 around this area, a lot of people were out of work. I was working on the road, and I didn't like it so I made up my mind to work at the Arsenal. The Arsenal wasn't hiring at that time, but the District solicited them for their top three applications for electrician and I got the job."

Helms says he especially likes working for the District and

the environment he gets to work in everyday.

"I'm in an environment that's clean and the people are nice."

He is a classic car enthusiast and owns a 1962 Nova Convertible that he totally refurbished. The Nova recently placed in the top 25 in Las Vegas and Cedar Rapids car shows.

Although Helms loves cars, metal detecting is his number one hobby.

"In the five years I've been doing it, I've found more than 8,000 coins and 50 rings," said Helms. "Recently I hunted an old-county schoolyard outside Cuba, Wis. I found a lot of great things there."

Helms' schoolyard finds include three 1880 Indian Head pennies, a 1912 Standing Liberty quarter, a 1900 Barber dime, and a black-onyx ring. While metal detecting is his primary hobby, his coin findings have made him into somewhat of a coin collector as well ... but at a cheaper price.

"It's not like you're buying the coins, you're finding money that was lost, and it's really neat."

Helms and his wife live in Moline, Ill. He has three children, which include two sons and a daughter. His oldest son, 30, works on Arsenal Island, while his daughter, 26, is working towards her master's degree and expecting a child in August. The child will be



**Gaylord Helms, Logistics Management, installs an electrical outlet for use with new systems furniture in the Clock Tower Annex. The job is one of hundreds Helms performs daily.**

Photo by Mark Kane

Helms' first grandchild.

His advice to anyone reading this article is the same as what he's told his kids, "Your job and salary are important, but not nearly as important as liking what you do," said Helms. "Go with the flow and try to be open-minded."

Helms attributes most of his success to his response time.

"I've learned to always respond to everyone, even if I can't do something right away, I always respond as soon as possible," said Helms. 🏠

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### On the Cover

A winter view of the Saylorville Dam with a Sun Dog, an atmospheric halo formed by a parhelic circle that rings the sky. It is milky white and formed by millions of ice crystals with vertical faces each mirroring the sun around the sky.

The photo was taken by Park Ranger Dan Crone, Saylorville Lake, Dec. 21, 2000.

### Corrections and Updates

The following corrections are noted from the January/February Tower Times. Page 2 - Dawn Gatlin is not Joyce Byrd's supervisor; Page 8 - Photo taken by Assistant Lockmaster Rick Vesper, Marseilles Lock and Dam; Page 14 - Chief of Engineers' visit/Town Hall cancelled.